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Luke 10:38-42
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The Indescribable Gift of QUALITY TIME

Do you know our natural tendency when we meet someone who speaks another language? We start speaking slower and louder. Ever notice that?

We think if we just speak slowly enough and loud enough, they will magically be able to understand English. We treat them as if they're hard of hearing.

The same can happen in our relationships. One person speaks the language of QUALITY TIME, the other speaks acts of service. Happened last night at the crab feed. I wanted to crack crab for DeLynn because that's my love language, but not hers, she just wanted me to be there.

If we don't know the others love language, we figure one or the other is hard of hearing. We end up shouting past each other until we finally give up in frustration.

Love means working to understand the other. Each love language communicates, "I've been thinking about you—a lot." I understand what you care about—and I'm going to do something about it.

I hope you took the little quiz I handed out last week. I have more quizzes if you didn't get one. Most of us have two primary love languages.

So ... how many of you have your primary love language as words of affirmation ... physical touch ... acts of service ... receiving gifts ... or this week's love language – QUALITY TIME?

Did you know that in a lifetime the average American will spend:

- Six months sitting at stoplights.
- Eight months opening junk mail.
- One year looking for misplaced objects.
- 2 years unsuccessfully returning phone calls.
- 4 years doing housework.
- 5 years waiting in line. 6 years eating?'

I know, I get the six years of eating ... but, FOUR YEARS of doing housework???

What do you do with your time?

Here's another way to look at it. There are 168 hours in each week.

The average person will spend about 56 of those hours sleeping, about 24 of those hours in eating and personal hygiene, and about 50 of those hours working or traveling to work.

That means there are only about 35 hours a week of "discretionary" time left over. That's about 5 hours per day. Where are you investing those hours?

God says we should treasure time as a valuable commodity. We number our years (or at least some of us do), but God says every day is so precious, we should treasure it and number it.

So, we are invited to treasure every moment that we have!

As the saying goes: Yesterday is history. Tomorrow is a mystery. Today is a gift.... That's why it's called the "present!"

The truth is: "You can make more money but you can't make more time."

One more quote, "No one on their deathbed ever said, 'I wish I had spent more time at work.'"

Time is more valuable than money, like money it can be spent and invested.

But it's different from money though, because while money can be saved, time can't. If you don't use it, you lose it. Forever.

Spending QUALITY TIME, as described by Dr. Gary Chapman (who wrote the book I am basing my sermon series on, "The Five Love Languages"), means making a conscious decision to be focused on making time with a loved one, or loved ones.

It means being together likely without distractions. No TV, no cell phone, no text messaging, no Facebook, or the Internet. Nothing work-related. No lost in thought in your own little world.

QUALITY TIME means, let me quote the book here, “spending time genuinely with your loved ones in meaningful ways for the purposes of communicating the love you have in your heart for that person or persons.”

Spending QUALITY TIME can also mean doing things together, like going out on dates, going to concerts, shopping...

Even doing projects around the house, or out in the community or at church, the key is doing it together.

The sky’s the limit.

You can also spend QUALITY TIME with one another by having quality conversations with each other.

To speak together from the heart, being willing to be vulnerable as you share what’s going on in your life, or how your day went, or what you experienced during the movie, etc. or whatever.

Being. Doing. Speaking. These are dialects of the same love language of QUALITY TIME that communicates love to another person. If that is their love language.

A woman sits next to an attractive man on a bus. She says, “You look just like my 4th husband.”

The man replied, “FOURTH husband. How many times have you been married?”

The woman smiled, winked and replied, “Three.”

Now, that's a great pick-up line. But for the Samaritan woman, in our first scripture text this morning, having had 5 husbands and living with a man who was not her husband, was no joking matter.

She was a Samaritan and a woman, and culturally, Jesus shouldn't have talked to her, but Jesus did.

When others would not give her the time of day, Jesus spent QUALITY TIME with the Samaritan woman.

Jesus is maybe the best model for us in regards to the love language of QUALITY TIME. QUALITY TIME means that we listen for our loved one's emotions.

QUALITY TIME means we give undivided attention to another. QUALITY TIME says there is nothing more important at this moment than you.

Which brings us to our second gospel text, this time from Luke. Both Martha and Mary are with Jesus.

Mary is sitting at his feet and Martha is apparently distracted by all the work that has to be done.

So, she complains to Jesus. To which Jesus tells Martha that Mary had chosen the better part. Hmmm.

So, are you a Mary, or are you a Martha?

Do you have a Mary tendency to spend QUALITY TIME with the one you love, or a Martha tendency to be distracted by the tasks at hand?

This story is not simplistically saying, “Mary ... good, Martha ... bad. Learning ... good, serving ... bad.”

Both are needed for the faithful life. But, there’s one thing in this story that caused Martha to get off track.

One word gives us a clue for Jesus’ response. And that one word is distracted.

“But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made” (Luke 10:40).

Martha is the patron saint for a culture driven to distraction. We, like her, let other things drive us—rather than letting the main thing drive us.

Martha got distracted and forgot the main reason she was serving.

Jesus was the main thing. The better choice is spending QUALITY TIME with Jesus. (which I bet is one of his primary love languages)

Mary spent QUALITY TIME with Jesus. She sat at his feet listening to his words. That’s what mattered to him at the time – what he really wanted was QUALITY TIME.

Martha didn’t take the time to find out what mattered more to Jesus. Mary was focused on Jesus. Martha was focused on the task-at-hand.

Just like then, God wants to spend QUALITY TIME with us today.

During this season of Lent, we are invited and encouraged to also spend QUALITY TIME with God.

Which means we need to set time aside for God – make him a priority.

Which begs the question: Why don't we make time with God a higher priority? There are all sorts of reasons. Imagine saying any of these things to a spouse or loved one. See how well they fly.

"I don't want to be legalistic about it, so I'm not going to talk to you every day. Maybe when I need something, I'll call you."

"I can think about you in nature, when I walk through the woods. I can think about anytime, so I don't have to come home for a couple of weeks."

"I'm really busy right now. I think there will be more time during the summer. At least, I'll see you at Easter and don't forget Christmas."

Aren't we really saying those things to God when we neglect spending **QUALITY TIME** with him?

I would like to close with a true story about how **QUALITY TIME** literally made the difference between life and death for one baby girl.

Susan found out that she was pregnant and so she did what she could to prepare her young son Michael for his new sibling.

They find out that the new baby was going to be a girl and day after day, night after night, Michael sang to his sister in his mother's tummy.

The pregnancy progresses normally for Susan. And then the labor pains come. Every five minutes and then every minute.

But complications arise during delivery. There are hours of labor and finally Michael's little sister is born. But she is in serious condition.

The infant is rushed to the neonatal intensive care unit at St. Mary's hospital. The days inch by. The girl gets worse.

The pediatric specialist tells the parents, "I'm afraid there is very little hope. Be prepared for the worst."

Susan and her husband contact a local cemetery about a burial plot. They had fixed up a special room in their home for the baby and now they plan a funeral.

Meanwhile, Michael keeps begging his parents to see his sister. "I want to sing to her," he says.

Week two in intensive care. Michael keeps begging his parents about singing to his sister but children are not allowed in Intensive Care.

But Susan decides she will take Michael whether they like it or not. She dresses him in an oversized scrub suit and marches him into ICU.

The head nurse yells, "Get that kid out of there. No children allowed!"

Susan, who is normally very mild mannered, looks the nurse in the eyes and says, "He's not leaving until he sings to his sister!"

Susan takes Michael to his sister's bedside. He gazes at the tiny infant losing the battle to live. And he begins to sing.

In a pure voice of a child, Michael sings, "You are my sunshine, my only sunshine; you make me happy when skies are grey."

Instantly the baby girls respond. The pulse rate becomes calm and steady.

"Keep on singing Michael."

"You never know, dear, how much I love you. Please don't take my sunshine away."

She continues to improve. "Keep singing Michael."

"The other night dear as I lay sleeping, I dreamed I held you in my arms..." Michael's little sister relaxes as healing rest sweeps over her.

"Keep on singing Michael."

"You are my sunshine, my only sunshine; please don't take my sunshine away."

Michael comes and sings to his sister for the next few days and shortly thereafter, the funeral plans are cancelled and the little girl is well enough to go home!

That is the power of QUALITY TIME, of undivided attention!

When we offer QUALITY TIME we are declaring to the other, "You are my sunshine!" Whether it be to a loved one or to God.

Michael knew this. Jesus knew this. My wife knows this.

May we know this, too.

This Lenten Season, may we make QUALITY TIME for all those who have that as one of their love languages ... and even those that don't.

Amen!